

MRIP HMS Work Group Conference Call  
October 7, 2008

Participants: Ron Salz (NOAA Fisheries Statistics), Dave McGowan (FFWRI), Grisel Rodriquez (PRDNR), Dave Donaldson (GSMFC), Stephen Stohs (NOAA Fisheries SWFSC), Mark Terceiro (NOAA Fisheries NEFSC), Greg Skomal (Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries)

**Action Items Bolded**

1) Update on current HMSWG projects

Non-tournament HMS Landings Reporting for Private Boats in the Caribbean  
Project Team Lead: Grisel Rodriquez

- Puerto Rico DNER is working on issuing a press release about the project in advance implementing the HMS telephone characterization survey. Approval to go ahead with this has been delayed because it is an election year in Puerto Rico.
- To pre-test the phone survey questionnaire Puerto Rico biologists have conducted interviews with HMS captains at two billfish tournaments. They have also attended Sport Fishing Association meetings and pre-tested the questionnaire with SFA members who fish for HMS.
- **The phone survey to all HMS Angling category permit holders will be implemented in about two weeks. All interviews will be conducted by PRDNER staff. About one week prior to implementation Puerto Rico DNER will mail a letter (modified version of press release) to all permit holders notifying them of the survey and when they will be contacted.**
- **Grisel will email Ron final translated versions of the questionnaire and letter to post on the collaboration tool**
- Grisel said that a lot of Puerto Rico vessels fish in Dominican Republic waters for white marlin. The work group agreed that we should get information about these trips. If they are landing in Puerto Rico the trips should be profiled in the characterization survey. If they land fish in a foreign country we should note this activity but not profile the trip. This is consistent with how Florida handles trips to the Bahamas.
- All milestones still on schedules (final report 2/1/09)

HMS Florida Pilots, Project Team Lead: Dave McGowan

- Dave said effort is way down this year due most likely to fuel costs and the economy. Catch rates for swordfish also appear to be down. The night fishery for swordfish has been real quiet but has shown signs of picking up in past week or so.
- Some preliminary raw data catch and effort results for Wave 3 and 4 were presented by Ron to the HMS Advisory Panel last week.

- The project got behind on data entry but **the goal is to get all caught up by the end of October.**
- Data are still being collected with pencil and paper. Dave has PDA's in his office but there was a compatibility problem with the software and so they are not being used.
- Dave estimates that all we should have characterization data on all charter boats by the end of calendar year. This is being collect during dockside interviews. Private boats will take longer for full characterization since there are over 5,000. **Florida will try to key enter all characterization data collected by mid-November and send to Ron so he can merge with Gulf and South Atlantic project data.**

#### HMS Characterization for S. Atlantic & Gulf, Project Lead: Ron Salz

- Phone survey of over 7,300 permit holders was implemented by SRG from September 2 – September 26. Calling period was extended a few days due to the hurricanes in the Gulf that made it more difficult to contact some people.
- About 5,100 completed interviews were conducted. The response rate was nearly 75% and the cooperation rate (of those eligibles contacted) was 96%.
- SRG is currently error-checking the data, coding open-ended responses and preparing SAS datasets for delivery (by October 26<sup>th</sup>).
- Milestones for this project have been pushed back and the new anticipated finish date (final report) is January 15, 2009.

#### HMS Tournament Sampling Project, Project Lead: Ron Salz

- NOAA Fisheries continues to coordinate with consultants from the University of Massachusetts on the data collection effort.
- Attempting to census all 63 registered HMS tournaments throughout the LPS range from Maine through Virginia. About half of these are billfish tournaments that report to RBS. We are working with Arietta Venizelos in Miami to get copies of the RBS data forms for these tournaments. Data from the non-billfish tournaments in Massachusetts will be supplied by Greg Skomal, who runs a tournament sampling program in Massachusetts.
- Dockside captain interviews: The UMASS doctoral student attended 5 HMS tournaments this summer and conducted interviews with captains. Ron attended the Ocean City Tuna Tournament. Information collected from captains will be used to compare with operators reporting forms to identify gaps or biases in this data collection method.
- UMASS will try to have all data entered by the end of October.
- Stephen Stohs, John Foster, Ron Salz and the UMASS consultants with work together on data analysis and report generation.
- Milestones for this project have been pushed back and the new anticipated finish date (final report) is February 1, 2009.

## 2) FY09 HMSWG Projects

- Ron informed the work group that the procedure for selection and funding of MRIP proposals has changed this year. Last year (FY08) proposals for funding came out of the work groups and were reviewed by the Operations Team for funding. This year the Operations Team will meet (sometime in November) and identify a priority list of projects for 2009 that will best advance the goals and objectives of MRIP. The OT will assign these identified high priority projects to the work groups who will then develop detailed project plans with estimated budgets.
- Despite this change, Ron still encouraged the work group to forward ideas for 2009 HMS projects to him. Advice from the work groups will be considered during the prioritization process and the HMS work group has representation on the OT.
- The work groups agreed that it is difficult at this time to propose HMS projects for 2009 because the outcome of all five on-going projects will dictate what we do next. Ron said the OT will be made of aware of this and should consider additional rounds of MRIP project funding for FY09 as results of these initial pilot studies become available.
- **Stephen Stohs said he will conduct an HMS data gaps assessment for the Pacific coast.**
- Dave McGowan said he would be interested in pursuing an internet/email HMS survey in the future. Ron said that testing a new data collection method like this would have wider applicability than just for HMS.